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### They Stop at Nothing

Remember the "Spetsnaz"? They were popular with the U.S. disinformation industry before the Los Angeles Olympics, when it was still assured that the Soviet Union would attend. The usual swarm of "high intelligence sources" and "recent defectors" let it be known that the Soviet athletes would contain in their ranks highly trained saboteur-commandos, known as Spetsnaz, who would sneak out of the Olympic Village and busy themselves in the greater Los Angeles area with unspecified missions designed to promote the international Communist conspiracy.

The Russians never came to Los Angeles. The Spetsnaz were forgotten, until late January, when *Jane's Defence Weekly* announced that since 1983 the Russians have been training and deploying female Spetsnaz at Greenham Common, the U.S. cruise missile base in England. Their mission: mingle with the regular protesters and then sneak through the fence and plant sonar devices on the U.S. cruise missiles, thus allowing the Russians to trace them wherever they might be deployed.

The story, datelined Washington and under the byline of Yossef Bodansky, gave no sources for these amazing allegations, beyond the usual vague "defectors" and "intelligence sources." But *Jane's* let it be known that Bodansky was a defector and could not be interviewed, since he feared for his life. Eagerly credulous and encouraged by U.K. government contacts, the British media, most notably Independent Television News, ran the story.

Quite aside from many intrinsic absurdities—Bodansky claimed there were always between three and six Spetsnaz, all presumably with impeccable accents, at Greenham Common, even though overall attendance there had, by late last year, fallen as low as seven—British journalists in Washington trying to check the story soon ran into further difficulties. Bodansky had no security clearance at either the Pentagon or the State Department, was not an accredited journalist and, far from lurking in clandestine fear, was living openly with his Russian wife in suburban Baltimore. He himself has never defected from the Soviet Union and is an Israeli citizen. I would add that British journalists are more susceptible to drivel than their American colleagues, but given the popularity of the K.G.B. Pope plot and

"yellow rain," it is impossible to make this claim.

Footnote: I am grateful to Leigh Hauter, apiarist in Virginia, for sending me some specimens of yellow rain. As reviewed by trained *Nation* investigators (JoAnn Wypijewski and myself), these specimens consisted of fragments of yellow-spotted leaf. Hauter reports: "They were collected from the area round my house. It was a warm day, just as the fall nectar flow was ending. I have about thirty-five beehives. One of the weaker hives was being robbed by the others [!], and several hundred thousand bees were swarming around the area trying to get into it. The next day I noticed that everything was coated with drops of bright yellow."

I had intended to forward the fragments to Bob Bartley, editor of *The Wall Street Journal* and virtually the last surviving believer in yellow rain, but mistook them for crumbled bay leaf and threw them in a stew which I consumed with relish last Sunday.